

**Bureau of Nutrition & Health Services
Iowa Department of Education**

Procedures for Handling a Civil Rights Complaint

1. Civil rights complaints are written or verbal allegations of discrimination based on race, creed, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion, gender identity, national origin, political party affiliation, or actual or potential parental, family, or marital status.
2. Any person claiming discrimination has a right to file a complaint within 180 days of the alleged discrimination. A civil rights complaint based on race, color, national origin, or age may be received at the individual school level, but it must be forwarded to the Bureau of Nutrition & Health Services (BNHS) of the Iowa Department of Education and to the Mountain Plains Regional Office of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).
3. The regional office then forwards the complaint to the Civil Rights Division of the USDA. Complaints of discrimination based on sex or disability must be forwarded to the Bureau of Nutrition & Health Services (BNHS) of the Iowa Department of Education for investigation and disposition.
4. All complaints, whether written or verbal, must be accepted by the School Food Authority (SFA) and forwarded to the BNHS. An anonymous complaint should be handled the same way as any other. Complaint forms may be developed, but their use cannot be required. If the complainant makes the allegations verbally or in a telephone conversation and is reluctant or refuses to put them in writing, the person who handles the complaint must document the description.
5. There must be enough information to identify the agency or individual toward which the complaint is directed and indicate the possibility of a violation. Every effort should be made to obtain at least the following information:
 - Name, address and telephone number or other means of contacting the complainant;
 - The specific location and name of the organization delivering the program service or benefit;
 - The nature of the incident(s) or action(s) that led the complainant to feel there was discrimination;
 - The basis on which the complainant feels discrimination occurred (race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability);

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- The names, titles, and addresses of people who may have knowledge of the discriminatory action(s); and
- The date(s) when the alleged discriminatory action(s) occurred or, if continuing, the duration of such action(s).